



Construction crews work on restoring Medicine Lodge Creek so brown trout are able to swim upstream more easily to spawn.
(Photo by WGFD)

Medicine Lodge Creek Stream restoration

CODY — Medicine Lodge Creek in the Bighorn Mountains has been getting wider over the past seventy years. This is happening because as the stream flows, it slowly but steadily pulls some of the soil from the edge of the bank along with it. This is called erosion. This is a normal thing that happens in nature; but, sometimes when it happens faster than it should it can hurt the habitat for the animals that live in and around the stream.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Aquatic Habitat Biologist Laura Burckhardt and other

state partners are trying something called a “natural channel design” to fix this stream bank erosion. “There is almost a mile of stream that has moved because of erosion. Natural channel design restores a stream by copying natural conditions,” said Burckhardt. “It solves all of the stream’s issues at one time and allows the stream to return to the way it used to flow.”

Game and Fish is working on the Medicine Lodge Wildlife Habitat Management Area to rebuild a stream channel and add new plants on the stream banks. The new and improved

stream will have less eroding banks and will naturally stay healthy. And, what’s good for the stream is also good for the fish. Medicine Lodge Creek has a lot of brown trout but they are all only 3 to 4 inches long. The work that is being done on the stream will make it so that these little fish can swim upstream more easily to spawn (which is what we call it when fish lay eggs). The stream will also end up with more places for little fish to hide. Game and Fish is hoping that this project will have lots of benefits for the wildlife and fish of Medicine Lodge Creek for many years to come.